How a Snowflake Forms

Passage 7 · Nonfiction · Grade 2

Name _____ Date _____

Snow science

199 words

Have you ever caught a snowflake on your mitten? Every snowflake starts high up in a cold cloud.

Clouds are made of tiny drops of water. When the air is very cold, a drop can freeze onto a speck of dust. This makes a tiny piece of ice called an ice crystal. More water from the air freezes onto the crystal, and it grows bigger and bigger.

Ice crystals almost always have six sides. As a crystal grows, it can sprout six arms. That is why most snowflakes have six points! The arms grow in different shapes as the crystal falls through air that is a little warmer, colder, wetter, or drier.

When the crystal gets heavy enough, it falls from the cloud. On the way down, crystals may bump into each other and stick together. Big, fluffy flakes are often many crystals stuck together.

Each snowflake takes its own path through the cloud, so it is very unlikely that two snowflakes are exactly alike. Scientists who study snow use magnifying lenses and cameras to see the tiny shapes.

Next time it snows, catch a few flakes on a dark mitten. Look closely. How many points can you count?

Stop and Think

Draw or write the most important thing you learned.

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